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ABSTRACT

This brochure for faculty at the University of Illinois discusses accommodations for students with disabilities. Problems such students have in the areas of time management, accessibility, and coping with sudden changes are considered first. Teachers are urged to address the question of disabilities directly during the first class by inviting any student needing special accommodations to meet privately with the professor. Characteristics of three types of nonvisible disabilities and accommodations for them are considered. These include learning disabilities, mild to moderate sensory deficits, and chronic disabilities (i.e., diabetes, seizure disorders, cardiac or respiratory conditions, lupus, and cancer). Specific guidelines for ensuring physical access are provided, as are suggestions for accommodations in lecture and laboratory classes, guidelines for encouraging class participation, and guidelines for providing reasonable accommodations during written assignments and exams. Descriptions of three campus resources complete the brochure. (DB)

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TEACHING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
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[redacted]CHING STUDENTS [redacted]H DISABILITIES

This brochure is [redacted]students with disabilities, the challenges these [redacted]ts encounter both inside and outside the classroom, and ways that professors can accommodate disabilities and enhance student learning. The University of Illinois has led the nation in providing access and services for students with disabilities. As a teacher, you can make substantial and rewarding contributions as well. It is helpful to understand several major concerns that these students face.

TIME To accommodate their disabilities, students usually need to spend more time on schoolwork and routine daily activities. They often rely on time-consuming learning methods that involve readers, notetakers, tutors, tape recorders, and more. In meeting classes, students with mobility impairments sometimes must arrive late or leave early because of the additional time required to navigate around campus.

ACCESS Inaccessible or partly accessible classrooms are a problem. In rooms with risers, students in wheelchairs have to sit in the back and therefore find it difficult to receive handouts, ask questions, and talk with instructors. Students with visual impairments cannot see items on the board, graphs, and overheads. Labs and computer centers are often crowded and difficult to navigate. Field trips may be inaccessible to students with mobility impairments.

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CHANGES To meet their responsibilities, students must invest in detailed care and planning, often scheduling activities far in advance. Last-minute changes in classrooms, assignments, or examination dates can severely disrupt their plans.

[redacted]RESSING QUESTION DISABILITIES

It is best to addre[redacted]question of disabilities directly, as part of the introduction to your class. At the beginning of each semester, make a general announcement: "If you need accommodations for any sort of physical or learning disability, please speak to me after class, make an appointment to see me, or see me during my office hours." Add a similar statement to your syllabus.

When you meet with a student, explain the course requirements and ask the student to clarify any special needs. Does the physical layout of the classroom pose problems, and if so, how can they be addressed? What arrangements can be made to help the student participate in class discussions? Will alternative examination formats be needed? Students are usually their own best advocates, and they know the techniques and adaptations that best suit their needs.

Remember that students with disabilities are students first, persons with disabilities second. It is natural for people who are not disabled to feel hesitant or uneasy when meeting people with disabilities for the first time. But people with disabilities are neither more nor less emotionally fragile than people without disabilities.

People often have questions about appropriate terminology. You need not worry about hurting the feelings of a student who is blind by mentioning the word "see." Students who are blind "see" ideas or concepts, just as students who are deaf "hear" what someone means and wheelchair users "walk" to class. Focus on the person rather than on the disability; think of the student as a person with a disability rather than as a disabled person. Words and phrases that are *not* recommended include wheelchair-bound, confined to a wheelchair, victim, afflicted, crippled, and invalid.

Professors and students can also deal constructively with nonvisible disabilities such as a learning disability or a mild to moderate sensory deficit. It is reasonable to ask a student to document the nature and severity of a nonvisible disability. There are three principal types of nonvisible disabilities:

LEARNING DISABILITIES which hinder students of average or above-average intelligence in easily and dependably processing various types of information. Students with dyslexia, for example, have a perceptual deficit that scrambles sequences of letters or numbers. Discuss with the student how the learning disability manifests itself and how the student has handled it in the past. It is important to realize that learning disabilities are not the result of a student's intelligence, physical or emotional health, or cultural or socioeconomic background. Learning impairments may exist with other disabilities. For instance, students with head injuries resulting from traumatic accidents may require accommodations similar to those needed by persons with learning disabilities.

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MILD TO MODERATE SENSORY DEFICITS (for example, low-level vision, slight hearing impairment), which can be accommodated by appropriate seating arrangements and room lighting.

CHRONIC DISABILITIES (for example, diabetes, seizure disorders, cardiac or respiratory conditions, lupus, cancer), which may interfere with stamina, attention span, and alertness, especially when there are adjustments in medical management. The attendance and performance of these students may be erratic, so they may need a flexible schedule for assignments.

Issue
Physical Access

Make sure that t[redacted]ssroom is accessible. Most buildings on cam[redacted]ve entrances that are accessible to students who use mobility aids (for example, canes, crutches, walkers) and wheelchairs. Individual classrooms and laboratories differ in how accessible they are. If you need to switch to a more accessible room, call the Office of Facility Planning and Management at 333-1232 for assistance.

Pay attention to seating needs. Students who use canes, crutches, or walkers may need a chair or desk that is close to the door. Students with other types of disabilities may need classroom aides such as notetakers, lab assistants, and readers; make sure that seating is available for these aides as well. The approach to seats must be flat, without steps or uneven surfaces.

Wheelchair users need flat or ramped access. Classroom tables or desks must have enough clearance for students using wheelchairs to get their legs underneath. Lab tables and computer consoles should be set up so that wheelchair users can comfortably reach the equipment.

Monitor access to out-of-class activities. Be sensitive to questions of access when planning field trips, assigning lab and computer work, and recommending visits to museums or attendance at off-campus lectures.

SIDERATIONS IN TURE AND ORATORY CLASSES

You can help, at t[redacted]y announcing to your classes that notetakers are needed or by referring qualified tutors and lab assistants to students with disabilities. The student and aides will make their own arrangements about the type of help needed.

Be aware of students' tape recorders. Students who cannot take notes in class may routinely tape lectures. For their benefit, it is important that you lecture clearly from a position close enough to the microphone to allow recording. Always explain what you are demonstrating in class, what you are writing on the board, or what is being depicted in slides or other visual aids. Students with hearing impairments may ask you to wear a lapel microphone, which is linked to a headset that amplifies your voice through wireless radio transmission.

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Face the class when you are speaking. Students with hearing impairments who read lips cannot do so when the speaker's head is turned. If you are writing on the board or narrating a desktop demonstration, try to avoid talking when you are facing the board or the desktop.

In class discussion and conversation, focus primarily on the student with the disability and not on the student's aide or interpreter. In talking to students with hearing impairments, some instructors tend to address the interpreter or to say things like, "Tell her she should . . ." Instead, look at and speak directly to the student, with only occasional reference to the interpreter.

It is helpful to distribute your reading lists in advance. Students who hire readers or who rely on braille, large print, and tape-recorded books will appreciate the lead time. By mid-semester, many students with disabilities try to obtain the reading lists for the courses they anticipate taking the following term.

THODS OF
SS PARTICIPATION

During your initi ting, ask students with disabilities what you ca help them participate in class. Students who cannot raise their hands to answer or ask questions, for example, may feel isolated or ignored. Ask them how they wish to be recognized in the classroom. Some students will want you to call on them. Others may prefer to meet periodically with you before or after class to discuss the course content.

Consider alternatives to oral presentations, if needed. Oral presentations may be difficult for students with speech impairments. Some students may want to give their presentations with the help of interpreters. Others may want to write out their presentations and ask an interpreter or another student to read it to the class. Still others may wish to give their presentations without assistance and should be encouraged to do so. You can request an outline as a record of the organization of concepts.

[redacted]TTEN ASSIGNMENTS [redacted] EXAMS

Ensure that stu[redacted]et the academic help they need to succeed [redacted]ur class. Although a student may have an in-class aide such as a notetaker or sign-language interpreter, these aides are not academic tutors. Students with learning disabilities may benefit from ongoing tutorial help from graduate student instructors.

When appropriate, encourage students to use word-processing packages to write their papers. Students with learning disabilities or with reduced manual dexterity can benefit from drafting and revising their papers on a computer. Students with dyslexia and similar information-processing disorders should be encouraged to use computers that have spell-checking features or to work with a proofreader or an editor while preparing their final copy.

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Provide appropriate test-taking conditions. Some students with physical or learning disabilities or both may need one or more of the following accommodations to complete their exams:

- A writing aide to transcribe their dictated answers to exam questions
- A separate room with better lighting, fewer distractions, or special equipment such as a computer console, video magnifier, or text-to-speech converter
- An extended exam period for students who write slowly, who dictate answers to an aide, or who have a unique processing speed
- The option of having exam questions presented in written or oral form, both of which should be equivalent
- The option of submitting exam answers in an alternative format: an oral version for a written exam, a written version for an oral exam, or an adapted form of an essay exam

If your academic department cannot provide alternate test accommodations for students with disabilities, the Division of Rehabilitation Education Services will do so, given sufficient advance notice. If you have questions or problems about appropriate test-taking accommodations, call the division's Office for Sensory Accommodations at 333-4604.

[redacted]OURCES

Division of Reha[redacted]on Education Services

333-4602

Staff members of [redacted]vision are available to meet with faculty members, graduate student instructors, and

students to:

- Act as your consultant to verify (with the student's permission) a disability and the need for accommodations and to recommend appropriate accommodations
- Assist in arranging for sign-language interpreters, notetakers, readers, tutors, computer-terminal typists, adapted transportation for academic reasons, and library assistance
- Conduct seminars and informal meetings, or to talk with instructors on the phone about accommodating students' disabilities in the classroom
- Act as a resource to facilitate improvement of physical access
- Arrange appropriate test-taking accommodations, given sufficient notice

Office of Affirmative Action

333-0885

This office will provide faculty and staff members with information about campus policies, procedures, and compliance related to the Americans with Disabilities Act and other federal and state nondiscrimination laws.

Office of Facility Planning and Management

333-1232

Contact this office to obtain a classroom with suitable access.

Publications by the University of Maryland at College Park, the University of California at Berkeley, and NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center contained material useful in preparing this brochure.

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